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Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Canada, Colombia, Japan, Monaco, New Zealand, Panama, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America: draft resolution

Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization

The General Assembly,

Recalling its previous resolutions on the subject, in particular resolution 62/150 of 18 December 2007,

Reaffirming that United Nations electoral assistance and support for the promotion of democratization are provided only at the specific request of the Member State concerned,

Noting with satisfaction that increasing numbers of Member States are using elections as a peaceful means of discerning the will of the people, which builds confidence in representational governance and contributes to greater national peace and stability,

Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted on 10 December 1948,[1] in particular the principle that the will of the people, as expressed through periodic and genuine elections, shall be the basis of government authority, as well as the right freely to choose representatives through periodic and genuine elections, which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures,

[1] Resolution 217 A (III).

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Reaffirming the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,[2] the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women[3] and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,[4] in particular that citizens have the right to vote and to participate in genuine periodic elections,

Stressing the importance, generally and in the context of promoting fair and free elections, of respect for the freedom to seek, receive and impart information, and noting, in particular, the fundamental importance of access to information, and media freedom,

Recognizing the need for strengthening democratic processes, electoral institutions and national capacity-building, including the capacity to administer fair elections, promote women's participation on equal terms with men, increase citizen participation and provide civic education, in requesting countries in order to consolidate and regularize the achievements of previous elections and support subsequent elections,

Noting the importance of ensuring orderly, open, fair and transparent democratic processes that preserve the right of peaceful assembly,

Noting further the role that the international community could play in creating conditions which could foster stability and security throughout the election and post-election period,

Reiterating that transparency is a fundamental basis for free and fair elections, which contribute to the accountability of leaders to their citizens, which, in turn, is an underpinning of democratic societies,

Acknowledging in this regard the importance of international election observation for the promotion of free and fair elections, and its contribution to enhancing the integrity of election processes, to promoting public confidence and electoral participation and to mitigating the potential for election-related conflict,

Welcoming the support provided by Member States to the electoral assistance activities of the United Nations, inter alia, through the provision of electoral experts, including electoral commission staff, and observers, as well as through contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance, the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund and the United Nations Democracy Fund,

Emphasizing that electoral assistance, particularly the provision of electoral technology, ought to be sustainable and cost-effective,

Recognizing the increase in actors involved in electoral assistance both inside and outside the United Nations,

Welcoming also the contributions made by international and regional organizations and also by non-governmental organizations to enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization,

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[2] Resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

[3] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

[4] Ibid., vol. 660, No. 9464.

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General,[5]

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General;[5]

2. *Commends* the electoral assistance provided upon request to Member States by the United Nations, and requests that such assistance continue on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the evolving needs of requesting countries to develop, improve and refine their electoral institutions and processes, recognizing that the fundamental responsibility for organizing free and fair elections lies with Governments;

3. *Requests* the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, in his role as United Nations focal point for electoral assistance matters, to continue to inform Member States regularly about the requests received and the nature of any assistance provided;

4. *Requests* that the United Nations continue its efforts to ensure, before undertaking to provide electoral assistance to a requesting State, that there is adequate time to organize and carry out an effective mission for providing such assistance, including the provision of long-term technical cooperation, that conditions exist to allow a free and fair election and that the results of the mission will be reported comprehensively and consistently;

5. *Recommends* that, throughout the time span of the entire electoral cycle, including before and after elections, as appropriate, based on a needs assessment that takes into account sustainability and cost-effectiveness, the United Nations continue to provide technical advice and other assistance to requesting States and electoral institutions in order to help to strengthen their democratic processes;

6. *Notes with appreciation* the additional efforts being made to enhance cooperation with other international, governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to facilitate more comprehensive and needs-specific responses to requests for electoral assistance, encourages those organizations to share knowledge and experience in order to promote best practices in the assistance they provide and in their reporting on electoral processes, and expresses its appreciation to those Member States, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations that have provided observers or technical experts in support of United Nations electoral assistance efforts;

7. *Encourages* relevant actors to join the emerging consensus surrounding the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, which aim to harmonize the methods and standards of the many intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations engaged in observing elections;

8. *Recalls* the establishment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance, and, bearing in mind that the Fund is currently close to depletion, calls upon Member States to consider contributing to the Fund;

9. *Encourages* the Secretary-General, through the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance matters and with the support of the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, to continue responding to the evolving nature of requests for assistance and the growing need for specific types of medium-term expert assistance aimed at

[5] A/64/304.

supporting and strengthening the existing capacity of the requesting Government, in particular by enhancing the capacity of national electoral institutions;

10. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide the Electoral Assistance Division with adequate human and financial resources to allow it to carry out its mandate, including to enhance the accessibility and diversity of the roster of electoral experts and the Organization's electoral institutional memory, and to continue to ensure that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is able to respond, within its mandate and in close coordination with the Division, to the numerous and increasingly complex and comprehensive requests from Member States for advisory services;

11. *Reiterates* the need for ongoing comprehensive coordination, under the auspices of the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance matters, between the Electoral Assistance Division and the United Nations Development Programme and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support of the Secretariat to ensure coherence of United Nations electoral assistance, and encourages further engagement of the Office of the High Commissioner and other relevant United Nations agencies in this context;

12. *Requests* the United Nations Development Programme to continue its democratic governance assistance programmes in cooperation with other relevant organizations, in particular those that strengthen democratic institutions and linkages between civil society and Governments;

13. *Reiterates* the importance of reinforced coordination within and outside the United Nations system, and reaffirms the role of the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance in ensuring system-wide coherence and consistency and in strengthening the institutional memory and the development and dissemination of electoral policies;

14. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session on the implementation of the present resolution, in particular on the status of requests from Member States for electoral assistance, and on his efforts to enhance support by the Organization for the democratization process in Member States.